

Slide 1 (Title slide):

Welcome to the Fear Free shelter course! Here, we will introduce you to the Fear Free Program and tell you about this course.

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The Fear Free Shelter course is composed of 14 modules. The first four modules provide instruction in basic concepts and skills that apply to all shelter workers. These four modules are required for everyone. You must complete them before continuing further in the course.

The remaining modules provide more specific information tailored to the various roles of shelter team members. After you complete the first four modules, you will be able to select additional modules that best fit with your role or roles in shelter animal care. You may also choose to complete all of the course modules!

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Fear Free addresses the emotional well-being of the shelter team, the animals we care for, and the people who adopt them. By creating a Fear Free shelter, we make everyone feel better. This includes both the animals and the people.

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The Fear Free program has several big benefits for animal shelters.

By using Fear Free protocols, shelters reduce fear, anxiety, and stress (FAS) and frustration in shelter animals. This makes the animals healthier and happier, and easier to find homes for.

The Fear Free program also makes the shelter a safer and more pleasant place for people to work.

Another benefit of the Fear Free program is that it improves relationships with people in the community. This includes volunteers, adopters, and pet owners.

Finally, the Fear Free program supports the life-saving work of animal shelters. Fear Free protocols improve the health, behavior and welfare of animals. As a result, they increase the odds of positive outcomes for shelter animals.

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We all know that shelter work can be very stressful. It is upsetting to see animals that are afraid, stressed out, freaked out, or are otherwise behaving badly. The stress of one animal affects other animals and it affects us, too. Like the animals, we can experience fear, anxiety, and stress (FAS) and frustration. These affect both how we feel and how we behave. Fear Free opens the door to a new way of interacting with animals and people in the shelter.

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What is the benefit to the shelter when a Fear Free culture is adopted?

Creating a Fear Free environment reduces fear, anxiety, and stress (FAS) and frustration for everyone. When animals and people feel better, they are easier to work with! Fear Free helps create a feeling of harmony within the shelter team. Fear Free care is better care and better welfare for everyone!

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Change is hard. Why should we change what we do every day?

Science can measure stress and its effect on health and behavior. We know that ongoing stress increases the risk of illness such as upper respiratory disease. It also increases the risk of problem behaviors, including aggression. Sometimes, stress prevents animals from being adopted and increases their risk of euthanasia in the shelter.

We know that admission to a shelter is stressful for animals. Dogs and cats commonly experience fear, anxiety, and stress (FAS) and frustration as a result of being confined in a shelter.

Therefore, preventing and reducing FAS and frustration will improve the health, well-being, and adoptability of shelter animals.

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Of course change is hard, but animal sheltering is all about finding new ways to help more animals and people. We have all seen animals who are experiencing FAS and frustration. What you will learn in this course is how to better recognize the signs and understand what they mean. You will also learn easy-to-apply methods to implement Fear Free in your shelter. With these new tools, the shelter team can work together to create a Fear Free shelter for animals and people!

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Fear Free is based on four cornerstones. First, we must realize that FAS and frustration are serious problems that we must recognize and treat! Second, we must remember that using positive communication with people who bring animals to the shelter, potential adopters, and the entire shelter team is essential for our success. Third, we must always use a “Considerate Approach” when interacting with animals and people. And, last but not least, we must always provide any necessary animal care by using “Gentle Control” techniques, rather than harsh restraint. You will learn about these four cornerstones in detail throughout the Fear Free shelter course.

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Communication is truly the heart of Fear Free. We must learn to understand how and when dogs and cats are communicating fear, anxiety, stress, and frustration. When we know they are experiencing these things, we can help them!

We must also communicate in a positive manner with the shelter team and the public. With good communication, we can deliver a Fear Free shelter experience for everyone.

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The Fear Free program is for all types of animal shelters. By working together, shelter team members can achieve the goal of creating a Fear Free culture through their united actions and attitudes. The Fear Free experience should begin from the moment of initial contact and continue throughout an animal’s shelter stay. At every interaction, all shelter team members must demonstrate compassion, confidence, and competence in applying Fear Free concepts and protocols.

The goal is to always create a Fear Free environment for the animals and people in your shelter. You can also help new owners create Fear Free happy forever homes for their new pets following adoption!

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At the end of the four required modules you will be able to:

- Describe what it means for an animal to be emotionally healthy and relate how they perceive the shelter environment
- Recognize how dogs and cats communicate their emotions in the shelter, including fear, anxiety, and stress (FAS) and frustration

- Understand how animals learn and how to set them up for positive learning experiences in the shelter
- Apply Fear Free concepts when handling animals in the shelter

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You may elect additional modules that will enable you to:

- Apply Fear Free concepts and protocols during intake and admission
- Create Fear Free housing environments
- Perform Fear Free daily animal care and monitoring
- Perform Fear Free medical care and procedures
- Provide Fear Free enrichment for dogs and cats
- Perform Fear Free adoption procedures
- Use medications and products to help reduce FAS and frustration
- Lead implementation of Fear Free in your shelter

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In conclusion, Fear Free addresses the emotional health and wellbeing of the shelter team and the animals and people they help. Fear Free works by preventing and managing fear, anxiety, stress, and frustration. This results in improved welfare, making everyone feel healthier and happier!

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Ready, set, GO!! It's time to learn more about Fear Free! With Fear Free, the shelter team can work together to create happy animals and happy people!

Now that you have successfully completed the Introduction, please proceed to Module 1.

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Thank you to our photo contributors.

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Thank you to our module author, Dr. Brenda Griffin.

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